

Jamie Higgins

My COVID-19 Story

I remember watching the virus spread, its movement reflected in headlines, map dots, charts, and statistics. It seemed so abstract, distant, and clinical. Until it arrived one day, like an unwanted visitor.

I got the phone call that my sisters, stepmom, and dad had all tested positive for COVID-19. "You better get tested too," one of my sisters said. I'd been exposed, when I stopped by their house a few days before.

I made a test appointment on a website and drove to the drugstore at the scheduled time. A man behind the drugstore's drive-thru window showed me how to insert a long cotton swab deep into one nostril, rotate for 15 seconds, and then insert it into the other nostril. I sat in my car in the parking lot hoping I was doing it right, then deposited my sample into a metal drop-off box. A few stressful days later, I logged into the website to learn that my test was negative.

Although I was relieved for myself and my partner, my family's symptoms were getting worse. At home, I googled the conditions that lead to increased risk for severe illness due to COVID. Asthma was listed. I thought of my dad's age and his history of asthma. I also thought of his bear hugs, his corny jokes, and the vegetable garden he grows every year. I sat at the dining room table and cried.

My dad lost 14 pounds in a matter of days. He didn't sound like himself on the phone. We begged him to go to urgent care. He downplayed his symptoms. He can be stubborn. We kept urging him to go. I didn't want to say goodbye to him through a hospital window.

Finally, he agreed. By the time my stepmom drove him to urgent care, pneumonia had already set in. I texted my stepmom throughout the day. I felt helpless. That night, I closed my eyes and silently asked the universe to help my dad survive this.

He was able to go home that night after being given fluids, oxygen, and the drug, Remdesivir. Over the following days, nurses provided additional in-home care. He's now recovering, though still not yet out of the woods. Fortunately, my sisters and stepmom did not require medical care and are recovering.

The speed at which COVID-19 hit my family has been chilling. The fear and anxiety that came with it, took me by surprise. This virus got real, fast.